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Gov. Shumlin signs largest investment in transportation infrastructure in state history

The \$685.7 million Transportation Bill 'will grow Vermont jobs'

MORRISVILLE – Gov. Peter Shumlin today signed the FY 2015 Transportation Bill, which contains the largest investment in transportation infrastructure in state history. The bill approves \$685.7 million in infrastructure improvements and maintenance, and supports the Agency of Transportation's (VTrans) vision of a safe, efficient, multimodal transportation system that promotes Vermont's quality of life and economic growth.

Key components of this budget emphasize economic development, safety, preservation and maintenance of the existing transportation system, energy efficient transportation choices, and the continued rebuilding of infrastructure damaged by Tropical Storm Irene and other recent natural disasters.

"I thank the Legislature for their recognition that a strong economy requires a 21st Century infrastructure," said Gov. Shumlin, who signed the bill while standing on a new bridge project in Morrisville. "I want to acknowledge the good work and leadership exemplified by the Chairs of the Legislature's Transportation Committees in supporting my proposal for record-level investment in Vermont's transportation system.

"This budget makes sound investments in our infrastructure that will grow Vermont's economy not only by directly creating jobs in the construction industry, but also by supporting other important economic sectors, such as tourism, agriculture, hospitality, manufacturing, among others," the Governor said.

"Several successive years of record level investment are yielding positive results," said Transportation Secretary Brian Searles. "We are seeing improved performance in pavement quality and in the condition of our structures. To continue these gains, this transportation bill will advance the repair or replacement of more than 100 bridges, perform preventive maintenance on dozens of structures, and improve more than 375 miles of pavement."

In 2008, Vermont ranked near the bottom of all states – 45th in the nation – for numbers of structurally deficient bridges. By 2013, the state ranked 28th. The overall percentage of structurally deficient bridges has declined from 19.7 percent in 2008 to just over 8 percent in 2013. The percentage of pavement rated in very poor condition has declined from a high of 36 percent in 2008 to only 21 percent in 2013.

Mindful of continuing energy challenges and the need to drive down the carbon footprint associated with transportation, this budget invests significantly in all modes, including railroads, public transit systems, airports, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. This budget funds nearly

\$32 million in public transit, including expanding car and vanpooling, the intercity bus network, and developing electric vehicle charging stations for the regional “Green Highway.”

To continue VTrans’ vision of boosting tourism and mobility along the western corridor, this budget invests \$19 million to improve 10 miles of rail line and make additional corridor improvements to bring us closer to our goal of delivering passenger rail service between Rutland and Burlington. The budget also funds nearly \$8 million in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and makes significant investments in our state airports to return them to a state of good repair and to foster public/private partnerships that add jobs in Vermont’s growing aviation economy.

“I want to extend a thank you to the Governor and his administration for listening to the concerns of the House Transportation Committee that were being expressed to us by our constituents,” said Committee Chairman Patrick Brennan. “We were able to add language and funding to see that class 1 town highways were included in the Fast Fix 14 program.”

Sen. Richard Mazza, Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, said, “I’m very pleased that the Senate supported the Governor’s proposed transportation program because this level of investment is necessary to maintain Vermont’s competitiveness in the global marketplace. We have been moving the needle positively on our performance measurements and this FY15 capital program continues that movement in the right direction.”

Specific program investments are as follows:

\$115.7 million for paving. This is a \$7.5 million increase (7 percent) over FY2014. This near-record level of paving demonstrates our continued commitment to improve the condition of the state’s highway network. A robust paving program is essential to maintaining the State’s existing infrastructure, and supporting Vermonters’ safety and mobility. This funding will improve approximately 95 miles of interstate and 210 miles of state highway through traditional resurfacing, district leveling and preventive maintenance. These investments will continue our record of improvements to pavement conditions.

\$140.3 million for bridges. This is a \$7.6 million increase (6 percent) over FY2014, and is the fifth consecutive year that planned bridge spending has topped \$100 million. The increase is attributed to increases in state bridge reconstruction, rehabilitation, and preservation. Planned spending on interstate bridges, where we have exceeded our performance target, is down \$9.5 million (15 percent). Planned spending in state bridges is up \$17.2 million (31 percent). The Town Highway Bridge Program funds all 24 bridges ready for construction and 38 projects in various stages of development. Funding for town highway structures grants is level funded at \$6.3 million, sustaining the \$500,000 increase of FY2013. Recent efforts and funding have allowed VTrans to exceed its performance goals in Interstate, State and Town Highway Bridge Programs, which prepares us well for our aging bridge population. This budget funds major construction on 80 bridges and large culverts, and preventive maintenance work on dozens more structures.

\$50 million for roadway. This is a \$3.1 million decrease (6 percent) from FY2014. The roadway budget includes \$21 million for continued Irene repair work, consisting of 130 miles of

improvements to several corridors that were impacted by Irene and the repair of 20 individual damage sites. Major construction projects include the completion of the Morrisville Alternate Truck Route, the continuation of the US 7 upgrades in Pittsford and Brandon, and improvements to US 7 & US 4 in Rutland.

\$13.3 million for highway safety and traffic operations. This is a \$1.8 million increase (16 percent) over FY2014. The budget for this important safety program is largely funded through a combination of federal sources, mostly created in SAFETEA-LU. Funding for the program is primarily infrastructure related on such projects as intersection reconstruction, roundabout construction, turn lane additions, work-zone assistance to municipalities, the High Risk Rural Roads (HRRR) program, and the installation of signs, beacons, signals and pavement markings. This program also funds the efforts associated with Vermont's Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

\$2.7 million for park-and-ride facilities. This is a \$1.4 million decrease (35 percent) from FY2014. The FY2015 budget funds the enlargement and improvement of five existing lots, as well as construction of two new facilities, which combined will create over 350 additional parking spaces. This budget also provides funding for upgrades to several municipal park-and-ride facilities and approximately 85 additional spaces through the continuation of the popular municipal park-and-ride grant program, which is funded at \$250,000.

\$29.8 million for public transit. This is a \$1.3 million increase (5 percent) over FY2014. The increase reflects the Administration's commitment to enhancing mobility for an aging population and also reducing our carbon footprint through increased investment in public transit which is reflected by a 5 percent increase in ridership. Transit expansion highlights include the establishment of an inter-city bus system. VTrans is actively reviewing the State's public transportation system in collaboration with transit providers to identify ways to improve system efficiencies through route integration, operational improvements, and consideration of organizational restructuring. VTrans is supporting two statewide investments for vehicles and technology needs to assist in reducing costs and enhancing efficiency.

\$19.9 million for aviation. This is an \$8 million increase (67 percent) over FY2014. The increase is predominantly federal funds (\$7.3 million) and is largely due to the FAA mandate to correct deficient runway safety area at the Rutland Southern Vermont Regional Airport, numerous improvements at the Newport Airport and Morristown Airport. Discretionary grants for these airports have been made available due to federal sequestration. The FY2015 budget will further repair aging infrastructure to include runway and taxiway pavement, hangars, efficiency upgrades, and improve approach airspace.

\$37.3 million for rail. This is a \$2.4 million increase (7 percent) over FY2014. This budget invests \$2.1 million to complete the track upgrades on the NECR from St. Albans to the Canadian Border and \$3.7 million for a federal TIGER grant for track and other improvements on the Western Rail Corridor. These investments will provide track upgrades for the Vermont portion of the planned extension of Amtrak service to Montreal and help facilitate future passenger service to Burlington. The FY2015 budget will help advance several critical rail projects including: the construction of bridge 219 in Pittsford, implementing several crossing safety projects and continuing to upgrade our structures to the 286,000 pound national freight

industry standard. This budget includes a total of \$19 million of investments in the Western Rail Corridor.

\$108.7 million for town highway programs. This is a \$16.5 million increase (18 percent) over FY2014. This increase is primarily attributed to a \$19.4 million increase in FEMA Public Assistance Grants, due to Irene and 2013 disasters.